



State of California  
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**Inquiry:** A relatively new procedure is being performed called percutaneous tracheostomy and usually requires a bronchoscopist and surgeon. The bronchoscopist is responsible for visualizing the insertion of the needle into the airway and to determine proper placement of the tracheostomy tube. In addition, instillation of medications and normal saline lavage with suction and specimen collection would be involved and performed by the bronchoscopist. The surgeon would perform the tracheostomy.

Is it within the Scope of Practice for Respiratory Therapists to perform the bronchoscopy portion of the percutaneous tracheostomy procedure if properly trained?

**Response:** It is the Board's opinion that licensed respiratory care practitioners could assist physicians in performing percutaneous tracheostomy utilizing bronchoscopy techniques (excluding tissue sampling) provided an appropriate training program was developed, approved and supported by the medical director and the medical staff at the facility.

The intent of the practice act does recognize the existence of overlapping functions between physicians and surgeons, registered nurses, physical therapist, respiratory care practitioners, and other licensed health care personnel (3701, Article 1, General Provisions). As such, the onus is on the licensed health facility to develop appropriate training and competencies that would provide this function in a manner that would be safe when administered to the public.

Reference # 2002-C-13